

END CAP WITH INTEGRAL PARTIAL REINFORCEMENT

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

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1. Field of the Invention

[0001] The subject invention relates to a heat exchanger assembly of the type having a tank at each end of a core with the tanks having open ends that are closed by caps.

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2. Description of the Related Art

[0002] Such prior art assemblies fabricate independent caps for closing the ends of the tanks thereby requiring separate and independent fabrication of caps as well as separate handling and assembly of the caps to the tanks. The independent caps may be connected to the side reinforcing members but such a process requires four independent caps and two reinforcement members. The end caps close the open ends of the tanks and are independently connected to a reinforcement member extending along the side of the core. In some assemblies the caps are extrusions of the reinforcement members or are stamped together, as illustrated in U.S. Patent 6,357,519 to Ozaki et al.

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BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION AND ADVANTAGES

[0003] The invention provides a method of fabricating a heat exchanger assembly having a core with fins and tubes extending from opposite ends and into openings in tanks at each end of the core and tank caps closing open ends of the tanks. The method includes forming a reinforcement member integrally with a tank cap via a connection portion with reinforcing flanges extending upwardly from the edges of the reinforcement members

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and terminating short of the connection portion. A tank cap is placed over each open end of the tank with the reinforcement members connected to the tank caps extending partially along the sides of the core and spaced from one another along the sides of the core whereby the core is devoid of reinforcement between the reinforcement members.

5 [0004] Accordingly, the metal components may be pre-assembled and inserted into a furnace where they are brazed together instead of being mechanically connected together as by crimping at the joint between the core and the tanks, which results in a protrusion from the side of the assemblies. The tank end cap integral with a partial reinforcement member reduces cost and weight. The concept of an integral partial
10 reinforcement member and tank cap is practical for applications with narrow welded tubes (less than 20 mm and low hoop stress) and mechanically folded tubes. The partial core reinforcement is only needed to support the corner tube to header or tank joints to resist thermal and pressure cycle fatigue. The partial reinforcement can also be used to mount external components.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0005] Other advantages of the present invention will be readily appreciated as the same becomes better understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in connection with the accompanying drawings wherein:

20 [0006] Figure 1 is a perspective view of an heat exchanger constructed in accordance with the subject invention;

[0007] Figure 2 is a fragmentary perspective view showing one corner of the heat exchanger; and

[0008] Figure 3 is a perspective view showing the tank cap and integral reinforcing member from the top thereof;

[0009] Figure 4 is a perspective view like Figure 3 but showing the bottom of the tank cap and integral reinforcing member; and

5 [0010] Figure 5 is fragmentary perspective view of the corner of the heat exchanger with a mounting anchor attached to the reinforcing member.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0011] Referring to the Figures, wherein like numerals indicate like or
10 corresponding parts throughout the several views, a heat exchanger assembly constructed in accordance with the subject invention is generally shown at 10.

[0012] The heat exchanger assembly 10 includes a heat exchanger core, generally indicated at 12, for exchanging heat with a fluid flowing between the ends thereof. A first tank 18 is disposed at a first end of the core 12 and a second tank 22 is disposed at the
15 second end of the core 12 for fluid flow through the heat exchanger core 12 between the tanks 18 and 22. The core 12 includes tubes 24 with heat exchanger fins 26 extending between the tubes 24, the tubes 24 extending from opposite ends between opposite sides thereof, as is well known in the art. The ends of the tubes 24 are inserted into openings or slots in the respective tanks 18 and 22 for fluid flow between the tanks. In other words, the
20 first 18 and second 22 tanks are disposed at the opposite ends of the core 12 and are in fluid tight communication with the tubes 24. The tanks 18 and 22 extend between open ends 30. In addition, reinforcing members, generally indicated at 28, extend partially along the opposite sides of the core 12, i.e., from the ends toward the middle. The tanks 18 and 22 also

include nozzles or pipes (not shown) to act as an inlet and an outlet to convey fluid into and out of the tanks 18 and 22.

[0013] The heat exchanger assembly 10 includes a plurality of tank caps, each generally indicated at 36, closing the open ends 30 of the tanks 18, 22. However, in accordance with the subject invention, each reinforcing member 28 and the adjacent tank cap 36 are one integral member. More specifically, each reinforcing member 28 and one of the integral tank caps 36 consist of one homogenous material, namely a metal such as aluminum. Each tank cap 36 is integral with each reinforcing member 28 via a homogenous s-shaped connector 37 having reverse bends 39 and 41. The tank caps 36 are configured for closing the opposite open ends 30 of both tanks 18 and 22 at opposite ends of the core 12. The connectors 37 may also contain a notch 43 to further facilitate the bending between the tank cap 36 and the integral reinforcement member 28 and provide a thermal stress relief area. The connectors 37 are of a smaller or more narrow width than either the integral tank cap 36 or the integral reinforcement member 28 to facilitate bending as the tank cap and reinforcement member are pressed into engagement with the tanks 18 or 22 and the sides of the core 12. As illustrated in Figure 3, each tank cap 36 is disposed in engagement with the open end of the tank 18 or 22. More specifically, each tank cap 36 has a dished configuration with a bottom 38 and sidewalls 40 engaging the interior of the open end 30 of each tank 18 or 22. The reinforcing members 28, the tank caps 36, and the tubes 24 consist of metal and are brazed or otherwise welded together.

[0014] Each reinforcement member 28 is connected to one tank cap 36 and extends along the side of the core 12 with the reinforcement members 28 on each side of the core 12 being spaced from one another longitudinally along the side of the core 12 whereby

the core 12 is devoid of reinforcement longitudinally between the reinforcement members 28. In fact, the reinforcement members 28 are placed into direct engagement with the fins 26 of the core 12, as best illustrated in Figure 2.

[0015] Each reinforcement member 28 includes a pair of reinforcing flanges 42 extending upwardly from the edges of the reinforcement members 28 and terminate at inwardly inclined ends short of the connection portion 37. The flanges 42 extend in the opposite direction from the direction in which the side walls 40 extend to the bottom 38 of each tank cap 36. In addition, the flanges 42 of the reinforcing members 28 define openings 44 therein and, as shown in Figure 5, an anchor 46 is attached to the flanges 42 in the openings 44 therein.

[0016] As will be appreciated, the invention provides a method of fabricating a heat exchanger assembly 10 having a core 12 with fins 26 and tubes 24 extending from opposite ends and into openings or slots in tanks 18 or 22 at each end of the core 12 and reinforcement members 28 extending along opposite sides of the core 12 with tank caps 36 closing open ends 30 of the tanks 18 or 22, wherein a pair of reinforcement members 28 are each formed integrally with a tank cap 36. by a connection portion 37. In order to facilitate the closure of the open ends 30 of the tanks 18 and 22, each tank cap 36 is formed with a dished configuration having a bottom 38 for disposition in the open end 30 of the tank 18 and 22 and side walls 40 for engaging the interior of the tank 18 and 22 for being brazed thereto. As each tank cap 36 is placed over an open end 30 of a tank 18 or 22, the integrally connected reinforcement member 28 is placed into engagement with the fins 26 to extend along the side of the core 12 in spaced relationship from another reinforcement member 28

along the side of the core 12 whereby the core 12 is devoid of reinforcement between the longitudinally spaced reinforcement members 28.

[0017] The method may include forming openings 44 in the flanges 42 of the reinforcing members 28 and attaching an anchor 46 to the flanges 42 in the openings 44 thereof, as with bolts extending through the anchors 46 and the openings 44.

[0018] Obviously, many modifications and variations of the present invention are possible in light of the above teachings. The invention may be practiced otherwise than as specifically described within the scope of the appended claims, wherein that which is prior art is antecedent to the novelty set forth in the "characterized by" clause. The novelty is meant to be particularly and distinctly recited in the "characterized by" clause whereas the antecedent recitations merely set forth the old and well-known combination in which the invention resides. These antecedent recitations should be interpreted to cover any combination in which the inventive novelty exercises its utility. In addition, the reference numerals in the claims are merely for convenience and are not to be read in any way as limiting.